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# BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

VOLUME II

NEW YORK, AUGUST, 1907

NUMBER 8

## HISPANO-MORESQUE COLLECTIONS IN THE MUSEUM



LARGE SEVILLIAN PANEL. XVI CENTURY

WITHOUT attempting to describe in detail the various choice specimens of Hispano-Moresque pottery in the collections presented by the late Henry G. Marquand and others, it might be well to say a few words to the student regarding the origin of this interesting and historic pottery.

A connected chronology of lusted pottery made in Spain previous to the fourteenth century seems impossible, although after that date there is a continuous chain of evidence until the seventeenth century,

and, in fact, down to the present day. Long before Spain became famous for its lusted pottery, the mosque of Sidi-Ogba at Kairuan (Tunis) was decorated with lusted wall-tiles made by a Bagdad potter at Kairuan about A. D. 894. Nissiri-Khosrau, a celebrated writer of the eleventh century, speaks of "translucent vases of a hue which changed according to the position given them," made at Misr (Cairo). The first authentic and historic information with regard to Hispano-Moresque pottery appears to be in the year 1154, when Edrisi tells of the manufacture of golden pottery carried on at Calatayud (in the province of Saragossa), and of its being exported to distant parts. Later, when James I. of Aragon had, through conquest, in 1238, taken possession of Valencia, he issued a special charter to the Moors of Xativa, in 1251, permitting to every master-potter the free practice of his craft, upon payment for each kiln, of a besant annually. Ibn Sa'id and Ibn Batuta both refer to the golden pottery of Malaga (Southern Andalusia) in the same century, while Ibn el Hatib speaks of it in the fourteenth century. The famous Alhambra vase is generally conceded to be of Malagan manufacture, probably because the palace of the Alhambra was at Granada, and Malaga produced the finest lusted pottery in the kingdom of Granada at that time.

Early in the fifteenth century, Valencia, with its adjacent towns of Manises, Paterna, Gesarte, and Mislata, became famous as the headquarters of Hispano-Moresque pottery, and large shipments were made to Venice, to the exclusion of all other earthenwares, as is evidenced by a decree of the Venetian Senate of 1455,

which stipulated that "no earthenware of any kind should be introduced into the dominions of the republic, except the *correzzoli* and majolica of Valencia, which were to be entry free."

The various styles of ornamentation are comparatively few, and can be classified very easily as to dates, on account of the number of specimens, plaques in particular, having in addition to one or other style of ornamentation, armorial bearings in the centre, of the various reigning monarchs, princes and nobles of both Spain and Italy.

For example the "large and small mock-Arabic inscriptions" in deep blue, with coppery gold ornament and red lustre on cream ground, belong to the earliest part of the fifteenth century, during the reign of Alfonso V. of Aragon. The "spur" band design, in pale gold lustre, on a ground of cross-hatching, belongs to this period, and is occasionally met with, having in the centre the arms of Castile-Leon and Aragon.

The "flowers and leaves" pattern on a dotted ground, with delicate spiral stems intermingled with bryony leaves, dates from 1404 to 1430. The "panels of large, crude leaves and foliage," sometimes alternating with crowns in heavy outline, in blue upon a cream body, with brownish gold lustre, belong to a later period (1450-1479), covering the latter part of Alfonso V.'s reign, and the earlier half of John II.'s reign. Then follows the "large blue and golden vine-leaves" motif; the "bryony leaves" in blue; and the combination of vine leaves in blue with circles of vine leaves in brownish gold lustre; all of which varieties belong to this period. The "diaper pattern of dots and stalks," in pale and dark golden lustre, frequently in thirteen to fifteen compartments radiating towards the centre, outlined in relief, with scattered raised dots in blue and gold lustre, occur in the reign of Ferdinand II (1479-1516). The many varieties of "gadroon borders," sometimes with embossed spiral or gadroon centres, belong to the latter part of the fifteenth century.

Some of these later designs were carried on during the early part of the fifteenth

century, but about this time there was a distinct decadence, both in technique and ornament, and the use of large acanthus leaves, incised or in relief, around the rims of plaques, with coarser and more careless treatment were frequent. The metallic colors and lustres were crude and ruddy, and the enamel of an inferior and yellower tone. These are the most general styles of ornamentation, and are met with on plaques, vases, bowls, drug jars (*albarelli*) and occasionally also on jugs. Of course, there are many other styles of decorations, which occur less frequently, and their dates can only be decided approximately, by careful study of the technique, quality of the lustre and color of the enamel.

The student will also find that a thorough knowledge of heraldry, both Spanish and Italian, will be of great assistance to him in determining the dates of pieces bearing coats of arms.

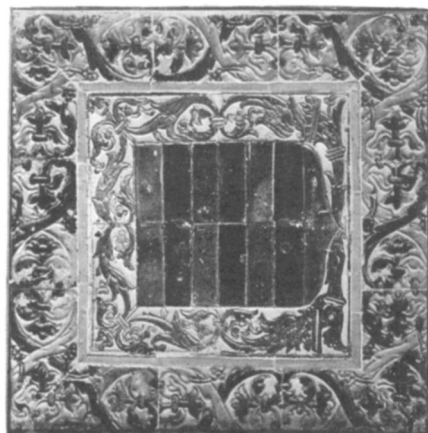
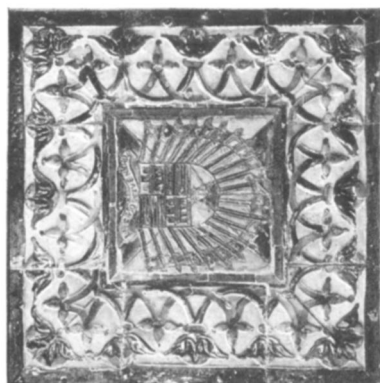
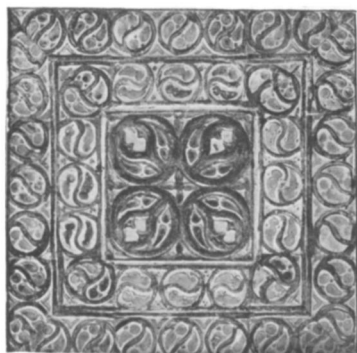
There are many plaques with letters I. H. S. in the centre, with some of the earlier ornamentations for a ground-work. The eagle, bull, lion and antelope are also frequently met with, generally in blue, or pale gold lustre. The eagle, which occurs most frequently, may be heraldic, but it is more probably intended to be symbolical of St. John, the Evangelist, the patron Saint of Valencia. Vases also are known to have the eagle, not enclosed in an escutcheon, showing that it has no heraldic significance, and the inscription "In principio erat verbum, et verbum erat apud Deum," which are the first words of St. John's gospel. The bull, lion, and antelope are probably used with ornamental sense only, and are generally in blue, or pale gold lustre.

The exportation from Valencia of large quantities of this pottery to Venice, which commenced in the year 1455, caused a demand for armorial plaques by the noble families of Italy, the styles of ornamentation of which were principally the "bryony leaf" in blue; the "small rounded vine-leaf" in pale gold lustre, and a combination of the latter, with fine and delicate diapering.

There is a continuous chain of documentary evidence with regard to the pot-



HISPANO-MORESQUE FLAQUES



HISPANO-MORESQUE TILES

tery industry of Valencia, carrying through the sixteenth century to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Philip III. ordered the banishment of the Moors, and in 1609-1610, 140,000 were deported for Africa, including some 20,000 from the pottery districts of Manises, Paterna, and the neighboring towns. This was

the death-blow to one of the greatest of Spanish industries, and although Hispano-Moresque pottery continued to be made, and still continues, it soon became a poor commercial enterprise, entirely lacking the artistic beauty which the Moors for centuries had given it.

ARTHUR VEEL ROSE.



VALENCIAN WATER-BOTTLE, WITH THE ARMS OF THE DUKE OF  
SEGORBIA  
ABOUT 1450-1470